

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

## 1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

1998

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

## 2. Country:

Australia

## 3. Name of wetland:

"Riverland", South Australia

## 4. Geographical coordinates:

Latitude: (approx) 34° 11'S to 33° 53'S; Longitude: (approx) 140° 42'E to 141° 00'E

## 5. Altitude:

Approximately 25 - 45 metres.

## 6. Area:

Total area - 30,600 ha (approx.)

## 7. Overview:

The area is part of the River Murray system and contains a variety of wetland types including: channels, anabranches, billabongs, floodplains, swamps and lakes in semi-natural condition.

Wetlands specifically include:

Coombool Swamp,

Lake Limbra,

Lake Merreti,

Ral Ral Creek,

a section of the Murray River,

Woolenook Bend's

Horshoe Lagoon

and Murray River backwaters.

## 8. Wetland Type:

marine-coastal: A B C D E F G H I J K

inland: L (M) N (O) (P) Q (R) Sp Ss (Tp) Ts

U Va Vt W Xf Xp Y Zg Zk

man-made: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

## 9. Ramsar Criteria:

(1a) (1b) (1c) 1d | 2a 2b 2c 2d | 3a (3b) 3c | 4a 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site:

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10. Map of site included? Please tick *yes*  -or- *no.*

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11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page.

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**13. General location:**

Adjacent to the Murray River between Renmark and the Victorian and New South Wales borders.

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**14. Physical features:**

The Murray-Darling Basin drains one-seventh of Australia, an area of over one million square kilometres. Within South Australia, the waters are contained within the Murray River and its associated floodplain. In its natural state, the volume of flow varied considerably, however, flooding regimes have been significantly altered due to extensive control works on the system.

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**15. Hydrological values:**

The Murray-Darling Basin is predominantly flat to gently sloping with the Great Dividing Range on its eastern and southern fringes. It is recognised as Australia's richest agricultural region and the river is a major source of water for both urban and agriculture use.

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**16. Ecological features:**

These wetlands are part of the lower Murray River systems, which is one of the major centres for breeding of waterfowl in south-eastern Australia. The area is important not only for waterbirds but also for the magnificent Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) forest which borders the creeks and backwaters. Red Gums are a unique eucalypt specifically adapted to inland riparian habitats where regular flooding occurs. Red Gum forest reduces soil erosion, reduces evaporation rates and provides abundant nesting, feeding and sheltering habitat for a range of waterbirds and other native fauna. Red Gums are scenically attractive and their retention is important for the local tourist industry.

Common species of waterbirds include:

Grey Teal	<i>Anas gibberifrons</i>
Pacific Black Duck	<i>A. superciliosa</i>
Chesnut Teal	<i>A. castanea</i>
Australian Shoveler	<i>A. rhynchotis</i>
Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Pacific Heron	<i>Ardea pacifica</i>
White-faced Heron	<i>A. novaehollandiae</i>
Hardhead	<i>Aythya australis</i>
Musk Duck	<i>Biziura lobata</i>
Australian Bittern	<i>Botaurus poiciloptilus</i>
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>
Red-necked Stint	<i>C. ruficollis</i>
Banded Stilt	<i>Cladorhynchus leucocephalus</i>
Black Swan	<i>Cygnus atratus</i>
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Little Egret	<i>E. garzetta</i>
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Dusky Moorhen	<i>Gallinula tenebrosa</i>
Black-tailed Native Hen	<i>G. ventralis</i>
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Silver Gull	<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>
Pink-eared Duck	<i>Malacorhynchus membranaceus</i>

Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Little Pied Cormorant	<i>P. melanoleucos</i>
Little Black Cormorant	<i>P. sulcirostris</i>
Pied Cormorant	<i>P. varius</i>
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	<i>Platylea flavipes</i>
Royal Spoonbill	<i>P. regia</i>
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Hoary-headed Grebe	<i>Poliiocephalus poliocephalus</i>
Baillon's Crake	<i>Porzana pusilla</i>
Spotless Crake	<i>P. tabuensis</i>
Red-necked Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra novaehollandiae</i>
Freckled Duck	<i>Stictonetta naevosa</i>
Australasian Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus noveahollandiae</i>
Masked Lapwing	<i>Vanellus miles</i>

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### 17. Noteworthy flora:

The area contains large stands of native Red Gums.

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### 18. Noteworthy fauna:

In addition, the river system is noted for its importance in providing wildlife (including fish) habitat; key species include: the Murray cod, freckled duck and Murray tortoise.

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### 19. Social and cultural values:

The Murray-Darling Basin comprises approximately one-seventh of the continent, has a population of 1.8 million people and a further 1 million are estimated to depend on its resources for their livelihood. The Basin produces about one-third of Australia's total output from rural industries and supports 25% of the nation's cattle and dairy farms and almost 75% of its irrigated cropland. European use of the Basin is less than 200 years compared to Aboriginal interaction which lasted at least 40,000 years.

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### 20. Land tenure/ownership:

The South Australian Engineering and Water Supply Department reserves the right to take responsible action, in terms of the River Murray Agreement, to manage salinity and water levels in the River Murray in accordance with the "National Conservation Strategy for Australia" policy and in particular to:

- take an integrated whole catchment approach to the management of water and related land resources; and
- plan and manage water impoundments, flood mitigation and other watercourse works to take account of the requirements of fish and other wildlife and wetlands, estuaries, riverine forest and other ecosystems and affected aquifers.

The area consists largely of Government Land held by various departments; mainly the Engineering and Water Supply Department and Woods and Forests Department. Some of this land is leased for pastoral and other purposes while a small area is private property.

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### 21. Current land use:

(a) **the site:** the area is used for grazing, however tourism is the most important industry using the wetland. Small boats are used for fishing, touring and camping and large numbers of house-boats ply the main river. Four wheel drive and conventional vehicles are widely used for fishing and camping along the river.

(b) **the surroundings/catchment:** farming, horticulture and grazing are major uses within the catchment

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**22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:**

- (a) **the site:** unmanaged multiple use; this will change in the near future with dedication of the area as a National Park Reserve.
- (b) **the surroundings/catchment:** major concerns are related to changes in water flows and flooding regimes due to water regulation and to increasing salinization as a result of irrigation projects and land clearance.
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**23. Conservation measures taken:**

Developments regulated through the State Planning Act. In addition, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council was established in 1985 to provide for planning and management for the sustainable use on a coordinated basis of the Basin's natural resources.

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**24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

It is proposed that the listed wetland area along with a number of other important wetland sites in this region of the River Murray are to be reserved as National Parks. This proposal will involve the States of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales and will result in the development of management plans for the reserved areas.

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**25. Current scientific research and facilities:**

The Murray Darling Commission and the Government of South Australia both undertake research of the River Murray system although a specific site has not been allocated.

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**26. Current conservation education:**

Both the River Murray Commission and the South Australia Government are active in providing information on appropriate use and management.

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**27. Current recreation and tourism:**

The area, along with the adjoining main channel of the River Murray is popular for outdoor recreation. Pursuits include: boating, canoeing, camping, fishing and wildlife observation. Estimates on visitor use numbers are not available.

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**28. Jurisdiction:**

Government of South Australia

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**29. Management authority:**

Most of the area is Crown Land and management authority is vested in several State agencies: the Engineering and Water Supply Department and Departments of Woods and Forest and Lands. Small portions are held privately. The South Australia National Parks and Wildlife Service will become the principal management authority when the area is dedicated as a reserve.

Addresses:

Engineering and Water Supply Department  
GPO Box 1751  
Adelaide SA 5001

Woods and Forests Department  
GPO Box 1604  
Adelaide SA 5001

Department of Lands  
GPO Box 1047  
Adelaide SA 5001

National Parks and Wildlife Service  
PO Box 1782  
Adelaide SA 5001

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**30. Bibliographical references:**  
**REFERENCES:**

Pressey., R.L. (1987) The Murray Wetlands in South Australia: Management Considerations and Research Needs. Murray Valley Management Review.

Thompson, M.B. (1986) River Murray Wetlands, Their Characteristics, Significance and Management. SA Dept. Environment and Planning and the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia, Adelaide.

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